

# SERMON Concerning the Excellency and Usefulness OF THE Common Prayer

PREACHED BY  
**WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D.D.**

Rector of St. PETERS Cornhill,

L O N D O N .

AT THE

Opening of the said Parish Church  
27th of NOVEMBER. 1681.

The FOURTH EDITION.

L O N D O N .

Printed by T. James for Richard Northcote adjoining to St. Peters  
in Cornhill, and at the Mariner and Anchor upon Fish-street hill  
near London Bridge. MDCLXXXII.

А

# СЕМЕЙСТВО

Семейные

Избранные из Семейного

журнала

# Семейный Пиццер

2

Семейный Пиццер  
избранные из Семейного журнала

To the Right Reverend Father in God

# HENRY

Lord Bishop of LONDON,

One of His MAJESTY's  
Most Honourable PRIVY COUNCIL.

MY LORD,

**Y**OUR Lordship having signified your pleasure that the Sermon which you heard, when you did us the honour to be present at the Opening of our Parish Church, should be made publick; notwithstanding my averseness to print any thing in English, yet out of a just sense both of that Obedience which I owe to you as my Bishop, and of that Kindness which I have received from You as my Patron, I have now done it, and herewith made bold to present it to You. What Effect a Discourse of this Nature will have upon the Minds of those who shall have so much patience as to read it, I know not. But must leave that to him who hath the hearts of all men in his hand. My Subject I am sure is good and necessary: And as for my plain and practical way of handling it, it is that which my Text requireth, in that it commandeth that in our Christian Congregations, All things be done to edifying. So that unless I had endeavoured to suit it to the Capacities of all there present, and to make it as edifying as I could unto them, my Sermon had been a Contradiction to my Text: And besides that, I had lost my Design in Preaching it: Which was, to convince those especially, whose Souls, under your Lordship, are committed to my care and conduct;

# The Epistle Dedicatory.

of the Excellency and Usefulness of the Common Prayer, and so to persuade them to the constant and conscientious use of it; not only because it is conformable to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Practice of the Universal Church, nor only because it is established by the Laws both of our Church and State (though they also be very great Reasons but likewise because of that extraordinary benefit and advantage which they would receive from it, for the edifying of their Souls in whatsoever is necessary to their Eternal Salvation.

I am very sensible, that much more might have been said upon this Excellent Subject. But intending no more than a plain Sermon upon the occasion, I was forced to omit many things, and to confine my self to such only, which were most obvious, and seemed the most necessary for people to know and practise, in order to their being conciled unto, and edified by our Publick Prayers. And if upon your perusal of that little which I have said, you shall find any thing not agreeable to the Doctrine of our Church, I humbly submit it to Your Lordships Judgment and Censure; only desiring that You would be as ready to pardon, as I am to retract it.

My Lord,

I have one request more to make unto You, which is, that as You was the occasion of my printing this Sermon, so You would be pleased to accept of it, now it is printed: And if, by the Blessing of Almighty God, it may contribute anything to those great Ends, which you continually prosecute with so great Wisdom and Prudence, with such exemplary Care and Diligence in the Management of that high Office which he hath called you to, even to the Glory of his great Name, the good of his Church, and the Salvation of the Souls of Men; it is all that is desired by

My Lord, Your Lordship's most humble  
and most obedient Servant,  
**WILLIAM BEVERIDGE.**

# SERMON

Concerning the  
Excellency and Usefulness  
OF THE  
Common Prayer.

I COR. XIV. 26.

*Let all things be done to edifying.*



HEN *Judas Maccabæus* had new built the Altar, and repaired the Temple at *Hierusalem*, after it had been polluted and laid waste for Three years together, the Church of God at that time and place rejoiced so much at it, that they kept the Dedication of it Eight days, and ordered that the same should be observed every year; *Maccab.* 4. 59. And so we find it was in our Saviours time: for he himself was pleased to honour that

B. Festi-

Festival, though only of Ecclesiastical Institution, with his own presence ; Job. 10. 22. In the like manner, we of this Parish have cause to be transported with joy and gladness, and to spend this day in praising and adoring the most high God, for that our Church, which hath lain waste for above five times Three years, is now at last rebuilt and fitted again for his Worship and Service. For what the Altar and Temple were unto the Jews then, the same will our Churh be unto us now. Did they there offer up their Sacrifices unto God as Types of the Death of Christ ? We shall here commemorate the said Death of Christ, typified by those Sacrifices. Did they come from all parts of *Judea* to worship God there ? So shall we, I hope, come from all parts of this Parish to Worship God here. Was the Temple an House of Prayer to them ? So is this Church to us. Was that the place where God according to his promise came unto his People to bless them ? I do not doubt but he will do the same to us in this Place, if we come unto it, and carry our selves in it as we ought to do. In short, was the Temple the place where all things were performed that could anyway conduce to the Edifying of Gods People, as things then stood ? The same may be said of our Church, as things now stand. For whatsoever is or can be necessary to the Edifying of our Souls here, and so to their Eternal Salvation hereafter, is clearly and fully comprehended in those several Offices, which according to the Laws of the Land, are now to be performed in this Place. Neither is there any thing contained in any of them, but what doth really conduce to these great Ends and Purposes.

But this being a thing which is denied by some, and understood but by few amongst us, I shall endeavour to explain and demonstrate unto all. Which I chuse to do at this time, because 'tis the most proper Subject I could think of for this occasion. For unless what is to be now done in this place, will answer the ends wherefore it is erected.

erected, all the Costs and Charges that have been laid out upon it ; will be to no purpose at all. But if it can be fully made out, That the Service which is here to be performed, doth highly conduce to the Advancement of Gods Glory and your Happiness, the great Ends wherefore such places are erected, then you cannot but acknowledge that whatsoever any of you have contributed towards it, is the Best Money that you ever spent ; and that this day wherein the said Service is begun to be performed in it, is one of the most joyful days that this Parish ever saw.

This therfore is that which I shall endeavour to prove at this time : And for that end I have chosen these words for the ground and foundation of all that I shall say upon this Subject, *Let all things be done to Edifying.* For the right understanding whereof, we must know, that the Apostle having in this Chapter discoursed at large concerning the way and manner of holding Christian Assemblies, and having proved that whatsoever is there said ought to be spoken in such a Language, that all there present may understand, and so be edified by it ; he at last sums up the whole in this Proposition, *How is it then Brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a Psalm, hath a Doctrine, hath a Tongue, hath a Revelation, hath an Interpretation. Let all things be done to Edifying :* As if he should have said, Whatsoever gifts any of you have or pretend to, yet when you meet together upon a Religious Account, for the publick Worship of God, take special care that all things be there done, to the Edifying of all who are there present. From whence it is plain that the Apostle lays down this as a general Rule, necessary to be observed in all Christian Congregations. So that whensoever we meet together to worship and serve God, if any thing be there done which is not for our Edification, we come short of this Rule, and so we do too, if any thing be there wanting

#### 4. The Excellency and Usefulness

that may conduce to that end. For according to this Rule, as nothing is to be there done but what is for our Edifying, so also on the other side, all things that are or can be for our Edifying ought to be there done.

But for our better understanding the true sense and purport of this Rule, it is necessary to consider what the Apostle here means by *edifying*? For which we must know, That all Christians being, as the same Apostle saith, *of the Household of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner Stone*; Eph. 2. 19, 20. Hence whatsoever tends to the strengthening, supporting, cementing, or raising this Fabrick higher, whatsoever it is whereby men are made more firm and solid Christians, more holy and perfect men then they are before, by that they are said to be *edified*. And therefore it is a great mistake for men to think as many do, that they are *edified* by what they hear, merely because they know perhaps some little thing which before they were ignorant of. For *Knowledge*, as the Apostle saith, *puffeth up*; it is *Charity* that *edifieth*; 2 Cor. 8. 1. And therefore whatsoever knowledge we attain to, we cannot be said to be *edified* by it, any further than as it influenceth our minds, excites our love, and inclines our heart to God and goodness. And that this is the true notion of *edifying*, is plain from the Apostles own words, where he saith, *Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouths, but that which is for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the bearers*; Eph. 4. 29. For from hence it is manifest, that that only is properly said to *edifie*, that ministers grace unto us, whereby we are made more pure and holy than we were before. And therefore we read of *Edifying our selves in love*, Eph. 4. 16. and *building up our selves in our most holy faith*, Jude 20. which are the true graces that make up a real and true Christian. And nothing can be said to *edifie*, but what tends to the exciting and increasing of them:

them : Until we come (as the Apostle saith) in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledg of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ ; Eph. 4 12, 13. Hence therefore, when the Apostle saith, Let all things be done to edifying, his meaning in brief is this, that in all our Christian Assemblies, When we meet together to worship and serve God, All things there are to be so done, that we may return home wiser and better than we came thither, with our knowledg of God and Christ increased, our desires enlarged, our love inflamed, our faith confirmed, all our graces quickened, and so our whole souls made more humble, more holy, more like to God, than they were before.

The words being thus briefly explained, I shall now apply them to our present purpose, and shew that that Form of Religious Worship, which is prescribed by our Church, established by the Laws of the Land, and therefore to be used new in this place, agrees exactly with this Rule or Canon of the holy Apostle, even that *all things in it are done to edifying*.

But before we prove that that Form in particular which our Church hath prescribed, agreeable to this Apostolical Rule, it is necessary to prove first, That the prescribing a Form in general is so. For unless the prescribing a Form in general be according to this Rule, no Form in particular that is prescribed can possibly agree with it. But now that this Rule admits, yet requires the prescribing of some Form, is evident from the Rule it self. For the Apostle here commands the Church of Corinth, and so all Provincial Churches, to take care that in their Religious Assemblies *all things be done to edifying*. But how is it possible for any Provincial Church to see that this be done except she prescribes some certain Form for the doing of it ? If every Minister of a Parish should be left to his own liberty, to do what he pleased in his own Congregation, although some perhaps might be so wise

## 6 The Excellency and Usefulness

observe this Rule, as well as they could, yet considering the Corruption of Humane Nature, we have much caute to fear that others would not. At least the Church could be no way secured that all woud ; and therefore must needs be obliged to consider of and appoint some such Form to be used in all her Congregations, by which she may be fully assured that this Apostolical Rule is everywhere observed, as it ought to be. And although we should suppose what can never be expected, that all the Clergy in every Province should be as wise and good as they ought to be, yet it cannot be supposed that every one of them should understand what is for the Edification of the people as well as all together. And therefore it must needs be acknowledged that the surest way to have this Rule observed, is, for the Governours of every Church, and the whole Clergy, to meet together by their Representatives, in a Synod or Convocation, and there upon mature Deliberation agree upon some such Form, which they in their Prudence and Consciences judge to be according to this Rule, which the Apostle here lays down before them.

And besides that the proscribing a Form in general, is more for our *Edifying*, than to leave every one to do what seems good in his own eyes, We have the concurrent Testimony, Experience and Practice of the Universal Church. For we never read or heard of any Church in the World from the Apostles days to ours, but what took this course. Though all have not used the same, yet no Church but hath used some Form or other. And therefore for any man to say, That it is not lawful, or not expedient, or not so edifying, to use a Form of Prayer in the publick Worship of God, is to contradict the general sense of Christianity, to condemn the Holy Catholick Church, and to make himself wiser than all Christians that ever were before him. Which, whatsoever it may be thought now, was always heretofore reckoned one of the greatest sins and follies that a Man could be guilty of.

Nay

Nay more than all this too : For this is not only to make a Mans self wiser than all Christians, but wiser than Christ himself : For it is impossible to prescribe any Form of Prayer in more Plain and express Terms than he hath done it, where he saith, *When ye Pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, &c. Luke 11. 2.* And I hope none here present but will acknowledge that Christ, by whom alone we can be edified; knows better what is, or what is not for our edification, than we or all the Men in the World can do. And therefore seeing he hath not only prescribed a Form of Prayer for his Disciples to use, but hath expressly commanded them to use it ; we who profess ourselves to be his Disciples, ought to rest fully satisfied in our minds, that using of a Form of Prayer, is not only lawful, but much more for our edifying, than it is possible for any other way of Praying to be.

The same may be proved also from the nature of the thing it self, by such Arguments, which do not only demonstrate that it is so, but likewise shew how it comes to be so. For, First, In order to our being edified, so as to be made better and holier, whensoever we meet together upon a Religious account, it is necessary that the same good and holy things be always inculcated and pressed upon us after one and the same manner. For we cannot but all find by our own experience how difficult it is to fasten any thing that is truly good either upon our selves or others, and that it is rarely, if ever effected, without frequent repetitions of it. Whatsoever good things we hear only once, or now and then, though perhaps upon the hearing of them, they may swim for a while in our Brains, yet they seldom sink down into our hearts, so as to move and sway the affections; as it is necessary they should do, in order to our being edified by them. Whereas by a Set Form of Publick Devotions, rightly composed, as we are continually put in mind of all things necessary for us to know or do, so that is al-

*The Excellency and Usefulness,*

ways done by the same words and expressions, which by their constant use will imprint the things themselves so firmly in our minds, that it will be no easie matter to obliterate or race them out, but do what we can, they will still occur upon all occasions ; which cannot but be very much for our Christian Edification.

Moreover, That which conduceth to the quickening our souls , and to the raising up of our affections in our Publick Devotions, must needs be acknowledged to conduce much to our Edification. But it is plain , that as to such purposes a set Form of Prayer is an extraordinary help to us ; for if I hear another pray , and know not beforehand what he will say, I must first listen to what he will say next, then I am to consider whether what he saith be agreeable to Sound Doctrine, and whether it be proper and lawful for me to joyn with him in the Petitions he puts up to God Almighty ; and if I think it is so, then I am to do it. But before I can well do that , he is got to another thing : By which means it is very difficult, if not morally impossible, to joyn with him in every thing so regularly as I ought to do. But by a set Form of Prayer all this trouble is prevented ; for having the Form continually in my mind , being thorowly acquainted with it, fully aproving of every thing in it, I have nothing else to do whilst the words are sounding in mine ears, but to move my heart and affections suitably to them, to raise up my desires of those good things which are prayed for; to fix my mind wholly upon God , whilst I am praising of him, and so to employ, quicken, and lift up my whole soul in performing my Devotions to him. No man that hath been accustomed to a Set Form for any considerable time , but may easily find this to be true by his own experience: And by consequence, that this way of Praying is a greater help to us, than they can imagine that never made tryal of it.

To

To this may be also Added, That if we hear another praying a Prayer of his own private Composition or voluntary Effusion, our Minds are wholly bound up and confined to his words and expressions, and to his Requests and Petitions, be they what they will: So that at the best we can but pray his Prayer. Whereas when we Pray by a Form prescribed by the Church, we pray the Prayers of the whole Church we live in, which are common to the Minister and People, to our Selves, and to all the Members of the same Church: So that we have all the devout and Pious Souls that are in it, concurring and joyning with us in them: Which cannot surely but be more effectual for the Edifying not only of our selves in particular, but of the Church in general, then any private Prayer can be.

Lastly, in order to our being Edified by our Publick Devotions; as it is necessary that we know before-hand what we are to pray for, so it is necessary that we afterwards know what we have prayed for, when we have done; For I suppose you will all grant, that all the good and benefit we can receive from our Prayers, is to be ultimately resolved into Gods gracious Hearing and Answering of them: Without which they will all come to nothing. But there are two things required to the obtaining an Answer of our Prayers: First, That we sincerely and earnestly desire such good things at the Hands of God, to which, as I have shewn, a Set-Form of Prayer conduceth very much: And then Secondly, It is required also that we trust and depend upon God for his granting of them, according to the Promises which he hath made unto us in Jesus Christ our Lord. And I verily believe that one great Reason why Men pray so often to no purpose, is, because they do not take this course: But when they have done their Prayers, they have done with them, and concern themselves no more about them, then asif they had never prayed at all. But how can we expect that

God should Answer our Prayers, when we our selves do not mind whether he Answer them or no? Nor believe and trust upon him for it? For certainly trusting on God, as it is one of the highest Acts of Religion that we can perform, so it is that which gives Life and Vigour, Virtue and Efficacy to our Prayers, without which we have no ground at all to expect they should be Answered. For God having Promised to Answer our Prayers, except we trust on him for his Performance of such Promises, we lose the benefit of them, and by consequence our Prayers too. And therefore as ever we desire that he should grant us what we pray for, when we have directed our Prayers to him, we must still look up, Psal. 5. 3; expecting and hoping for the return of them.

Now as this is a thing of greater Consequence, so a Set-Form of Prayer is a greater help to us in it; then it is commonly thought to be. For if we hear another utter a Prayer *ex tempore*, which he never said, nor we heard before, nor ever shall do it again, it is much if he himself can remember the tenth part of what he said; How much less can we that heard him do it? And if we cannot possibly remember what we prayed for, how is it possible for us to expect it at the Hands of God? Or to depend upon him for it? But now it is quite otherwise when we use a Set-Form of Prayer. For by this means when we have prayed, we can recollect our selves, look over our Prayers again, either in a Book, or in our Minds, where they are Imprinted; We can consider distinctly what we have asked at the Hands of God, and so act our faith and confidence on him, for the granting every Petition we have put up unto him, according to the Promises which he hath made us to that purpose. And as this is the surest way whereby to obtain what we pray for, it must needs be the most Edifying Way of praying that we can possibly use.

## of the Common Prayer.

11

These things being duely weighed, I shall now take it for granted, That the using a Form in general in the Publick Worship of God is Agreeable to this Apostolical Rule, *Let all things be done to Edifying;* And so shall proceed to shew that that form in particular which our Church hath appointed to be used upon such Occasions, is so too. For which end it is not necessary that I should run through every particular word, phrase, or expression in the *Common Prayer*, much less that I should vindicate and defend it from every little exception, that Ignorance or Malice may make against something in it. For nothing ever yet was or can be said or written, but something or other may be said or written against it, either well or ill. But my busines must be to prove, That the Form of Divine Service, contained in the Book of *Common Prayer*, which is now used in the Church of England, conduceth so much to the *Edifying* those that use it, that it agrees exactly to the Rule which the Apostle here prescribes in that case. And this I shall demonstrate from four Heads. 1. *From the Language.* 2. *From the Matter or Substance of it.* 3. *From the Method.* And 4. *From the Manner of Performing it.* For if it be *Edifying* in all these Respects, it must needs be acknowledged to be so in the whole. There being nothing in it but what may be reduced to some of these Heads.

First, therefore as to the *Language*, you all know that the whole Service is Performed in English, the Vulgar and Common Language of the Nation, which every one understands, and so may be *Edified* by it. And this indeed is the Ground and Foundation of all the benefit that we can possibly receive from our Publick Prayers. And therefore in the Church of *Rome*, the Common People are made uncapable of being *Edified* by the Prayers of the Church, in that they are all made in Latine, a Language which they do not understand. So that when they

## The Excellency and Usefulness

meet to Worship God, there are seldom any in the Congregation that knows what is said there, except the Priest that reads it ; and oftentimes not he neither. By which means they have no such thing really amongst them as *Common Prayer*. Neither is it possible for the Common People to be ever edified by what is there said or done, except they could be once convinced by it of the horrible abuse which their Church puts upon them, in commanding all her Publick Devotions to be performed in an unknown Tongue, directly contrary not only to the Rule in my Text, but to the Design of this whole Chapter.

But blessed be God for it, it is not so with us. For ours is truly *Common Prayer*, for it is written and read in that Language which is *common* to all the Congregations in the Kingdom, and to every Person in each Congregation. So that all the People of the Land; whatsoever rank or condition they are of, may joyn together in the use of every thing that is in it, and so be joynly Edified by it. Especially considering that it is not only all in English, but in common and plain English, such as we use in our common discourse with one another. There are no unusual or obsolete words, no hard or uncouth Phrases in it, but every thing is expressed as clearly and plainly as words can do it : so that the meanest person in the Congregation that understands but his Mothers Tongue, may be Edified by it, as well as the greatest Scholar.

But that which is chiefly to be considered in the Language of the *Common Prayer*, is, that it is not only *common* but *proper* too. Though the words there used be all but *common* words, yet they are so used that they *properly* express the things that are designed by them. This I confess may seem to be no great matter at first sight, yet it is that without which we might be subverted by that which was intended for our Edification. For Improperity of Speech in matters of Religion, hath given occasion to all or most of the Schisms, Errors and Heresies  
that

that ever infested this or any other Church; as might easily be demonstrated. Hence the Apostle gave *Timothy A Form of sound words*, and charged him to hold it fast. Hold fast, saith he, the Form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, 2 Tim. 1. 13. As knowing that except the words whereby he usually expressed Divine Truths, were sound and proper, it would be impossible for his Notions and Opinions of the things themselves to be so. And certainly, if ever there was *A Form of sound Words*, composed by men since the Apostles times, our Common Prayer may justly deserve that Title. It being all made up of such fit and proper, such sound and wholesome words, that if we do but hold fast to them, there is no fear of our falling either into Heresy or Schisme. For they, being duly considered, will suggest to our minds right and true Apprehensions of all the Articles of our Christian Religion; and so not only make us sound, but build us up strong and firm in our most holy Faith. So that considering the plainness and perspicuity, the soundness and propriety of Speech which is used in it, the least that can be said of the *Common Prayer*, is that all things in it are so worded, as is most for the edifying of all those that use it.

And as the words in the *Common Prayer* are all as edifying as words can be, so, in the Second place, Is the Matter expressed by those words. For there is nothing in it, but what is necessary for our Edification, and all things that are or can be for our Edification are plainly in it. First, I say, there is nothing in our Liturgy but what is necessary for our Edification. There are no such Fables in it, or endless Genealogies, which, as the Apostle saith, Minister questions, rather than Godly Edifying, which is in faith, 1 Tim. 1. 4. There are none of those vain Disputations and impertinent Controversies, which have of late been raised in the Church, to its great disturbance.

sturbance, rather then its Edification. There are no New Opinions, nor Airy Speculations in it, which serve only to tickle Mensears and please their fancies, and so divert their thoughts from what they are about. Look it all over without prejudice and partiality, consider seriously every thing that is in it, and you will find nothing asserted but what is consonant to Gods Word, nothing prayed for but according to his Promise, nothing required as a duty, but what is agreeable to his Commands, nothing said or done, but what is grave and sober, solemn and substantial ; nothing but what becomes the Worship of our Great and Almighty Creator. And therefore nothing but what we may some way or other be edified by.

And as there is nothing in it, but what is Edifying, so all things that are or can be Edifying are in it. For nothing can be necessary to *Edifie* and make us solid and perfect Christians else, but what is necessary either to be *believed* or *done*, or *obtained* by us. But there is nothing necessary to be *known* or *believed*, but we are taught it ; nothing necessary to be *done*, but we are enjoyned it ; nothing necessary to be *obtained* but we pray for it in our Publick Form of Divine Service.

For first, As to those things which are necessary to be *known* or *believed*, it is acknowledged by all Protestants that they are fully contained in the *Holy Scriptures*, which make a great, if not the greatest part of our Divine Service ; and are constantly read over, the Psalms once every Month, the Old Testament once, and the New thrice every Year. And all the Fundamental Articles of our Christian Faith, revealed in the *Holy Scriptures*, being briefly summed up in the *Apostles Creed*, that we may be sure to keep them always in our Mindes, we have that Creed read and repeated, always once, and most commonly twice every day in the year. And seeing the God-head of our Blessed Saviour, the Foundation of our whole Religion, hath been, and still is denied by some, lest

we should be led away with the Error of the Wicked, every Sunday and Holyday we reade the *Nicene Creed*, wherein the God-head both of the Son and Holy Ghost is asserted and explained. And that we may not entertain any Erroneous Opinions concerning the most Holy Trinity, or the Incarnation of the Son of God, but keep the true Catholick Faith whole and undefiled, upon certain days every year we read that which is commonly called the *Creed of St. Athanasius*, wherein those great Mysteries are unfolded in the most proper and perspicuous terms that they are capable of.

And as all things necessary to be believed are summarily contained in the *Three Creeds*, so they are frequently explained in the other parts of our Liturgy: It so much that it would be easie to frame a compleat Body of Divinity out of the words there used: At least of all such things as are needful for any Man in the World to believe or know, in order to his Eternal Salvation.

The same may be said also of all those things, which we ought to do. For as we here do whatsoever is necessary to be done in order to our Worshipping of God in this place, so we are here taught whatsoever is necessary to be learnt in order to our serving God in all other places. So that no Man that frequents our publick Congregations, where the *Common Prayer* is used, can ever plead Ignorance of any one duty whatsoever: For if it be not his own fault, he may there be instructed in every thing which he that made him requires of him. For here, as I observed before, we constantly reade the Holy Scripture, which, as the Apostle saith, *It Profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly instructed unto all good Works*, 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17: And seeing it hath pleased the most High God to Comprise his whole Will, and by consequence our duty, in the *Ten Commandments*, hence we reade them constantly every Sunday

day and Holy-day throughout the whole year. By which means every one that doth not wilfully shut his Eyes may clearly see and fully understand his whole duty both to God and Man. Especially considering that in the Prayers themselves also there is frequent mention made of all those Vices which ought to be avoided, and of all those Good Works which ought to be performed by us. So that we can never come to Church, but we are still put in mind, both of what we ought, and what we ought not to do, that we may be saved.

And then as there is nothing necessary to be known or done, but we are taught it ; so neither is there any thing necessary to be obtained to make us either holy or happy, but we pray for it in the Common Prayer. For here we have the *Lords Prayer*, a Prayer composed by Wisdom it self ; and therefore it must needs be the most perfect and divine Prayer that was ever made. Neither do we use it only once, but in every distinct Service of the Church, in our Prayers before we reade the Holy Scriptures : And in our Prayers after : Towards the end of the Litany, and in the beginning of the Communion Service, and in every Office of the Church besides. And the reason is, because although our Saviour hath not forbidden us to use any other Prayers, yet he hath expressly commanded us to say this, whensoever we pray. And therefore in obedience to his command, our Church hath wisely ordered, That in all and every Soleman Address that we make to the most high God, we always say this Prayer, least otherwise by our transgression of his Command, in omitting this, we make all our other Prayers to be ineffectual. And besides, by the constant use of this amongst our other Prayers, we are always sure to use one Prayer, both absolutely perfect in its self, and most acceptable unto him, to whom we pray ; it being a Prayer of his own Composure : So that we speak unto God in his own words, and so may be confident that we ask nothing of him, but exactly according to his own Will.

And

And though all things necessary for us, be virtually contained in the Lords Prayer , yet our Church in Conformity to the Catholick and Apostolical , hath thought good to add some other Prayers in which the same things are more particularly expressed and desired at the Hands of our great and most Bountiful Benefactor. All which are so contrived, that there is nothing evil or hurtful for us, but we pray against it ; nothing good or useful, but we pray for it. There is no Vice or Lust, but we desire it may be subdued under us ; no Grace or Virtue, but we pray it may be planted and grow in us. In so much that if we do but constantly and sincerely pray over all those Prayers, and stedfastly believe and trust in God for his Answering of them, and so obtain what we there pray for, we cannot but be as real and true Saints, as happy and blessed Creatures, as it is possible for us to be in this World. Neither do we here pray for our selves only, but according to the Apostles Advice, we make *Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions,* and giving of *Thanks for all Men* ; yea, for our very *Enemies* ; as our Saviour hath commanded us, Mat. 5. 44. And what can be desired more than all this, to make the Matter of the *Common Prayer* Edifying either to our selves or others? Nothing certainly but truth and sincerity of Heart in the using of it.

I cannot pass from this Head, before I have observed one thing more unto you, concerning the Prayers in general, and that is, That they are not carried on in one continued Discourse, but divided into many short Prayers or Collects, such as that is which our Lord himself Composed ; and that might be one Reason; wherefore our Church so ordered it, that so she might follow our Lords Example in it, who best knew what kind of Prayers were fittest for us to use. And indeed we cannot but all find by our own experience, how difficult it is to keep our Minds long intent upon any thing, much more upon

## 58      *The Excellency and Usefulness*

so great things as the object and subjects of our Prayers are; but do what we can we are still liable to distractions : So that there is a kind of necessity to break off sometimes, to give our selves a breathing time, that our thoughts being loosed for a while, they may with more ease, and less danger of distraction, be tyed up again, as it is necessary they should be all the while that we are actually Praying to the Supream Being of the World.

Besides that, in order to the Performing our Devotions aright to the most High God ; it is necessary that our Souls be possessed all along with due apprehensions of his greatness and glory. To which purpose our short Prayers contribute very much: for every one of them beginning with some of the Properties or Perfections of God, and so suggesting to our Minds right apprehensions of him at first, it is easie to preserve them in our Minds during the space of a short Prayer, which in a long one would be apt to scatter and vanish away.

But that which I look upon as one of the principal Reasons, why our publick Devotions are and should be divided into short Collects, is this, Our Blessed Saviour, we know, hath often told us, That whatsoever we ask in his Name, we shall receive : And so hath directed us in all our Prayers to make use of his Name, and to ask nothing but upon the account of his Merit and Mediation for us : upon which all our hopes and expectations from God do wholly and solely depend. Hence therefore (as it always was, so) it cannot but be judged necessary, that the Name of Christ be frequently inserted in our Prayers, that so we may lift up our hearts unto him, and Act our Faith upon him for our obtaining the good things we pray for. And so we see it is in the *Common Prayer*, for whatsoever it is we Ask of God , we presently add , *Through Jesus Christ our Lord*, or something to that purpose. And so Ask nothing but according to our Lords Direction, even in his

short; for take away the Conclusion of every Collect or Prayer, *In the Name of Christ*, and you may joyn them all together, and make them but as one continued Prayer. But this would be to offer manifest violence to the Prayers, by taking away that which gives them all their force and energy, and so making them ineffectual to the purposes for which they are used. For certainly the Asking all things in the Name of Christ, as we do in the *Common Prayer*, is the only way whereby to obtain what we desire and by consequence the most *Edifying Way* of Praying in the World.

The next thing to be Considered in the *Common Prayer*, is the *Method*, which is admirable, and as *Edifying*, if possible, as the *Matter* it self. This none can deny that doth but fully understand, and seriously consider of it. Which therefore that you may all do, I shall briefly run through the whole, and give you what light I can into it, that you may clearly see not only the Reasonableness but the Excellency of it all along. For which purpose I shall instance only in such things which offer themselves at first sight, to any one that doth but cast his Eye upon it.

Let us therefore suppose a Congregation of sober and devout Christians, such as we all should be, met together to perform their Publick Devotions to Almighty God; every one of which hath lift up his Heart privately unto him already, imploring his Aid and Assistance in the Performance of so great a Work, and so are all now ready to set about it. The first thing we do, is to reade some *Sentences* of Holy Scripture, that so we may begin our Devotions unto God in his own words. And they are all such *Sentences* as put us in mind of our sins against him and of his Promise to pardon them if we do repent: That so we may present and carry our selves with that Reverence and Godly Fear before him, as becometh those

who are sensible of their own vileness and unworthiness to approach so great a Majesty ; And likewise with that Faith and humble Confidence, which becometh those who believe that he upon our Repentance will pardon our sins, and accept both our Persons and Performances , according to the Promises which he hath made unto us.

Then follows a grave *Exhortation*, concerning the End of our present Assembling; which is of great use, and ought never to be omitted. For Men generally are apt to rush into the Presence of God, without ever considering what they go about. Whereas, this *Exhortation* puts us upon considering the greatness of the Work which we are now engaged in, and so upon composing our thoughts and preparing our selves for the due performance of it.

Our Minds, being thus brought into a right frame and temper for it, we all, both Minister and People, prostrate our selves before the most High God, confessing upon our Knees the manifold sins and wickedness that we have committed against him. Which *Confession* is so contrived, that all and every Person in any Congregation whatsoever may joyn in it. For it runs in general terms. And yet so too, that every particular Person may and ought in his own Mind to confess and acknowledge his own sins, which he knows himself to be guilty of. As where we say, *We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.* At the saying of this, every one should call his own sins to remembrance, what Duties he knows himself to have omitted, and what Vices he knows himself to have committed, and confess them accordingly unto God; and when we have thus confessed our sins to God, we presently implore his Mercy in the pardon of them, and his Grace, that for the future we may forsake them.

And whilst we are thus upon our Knees, humbly confessing

fessing and bewailing our sins before the Lord our God, the Minister stands up, and in the Name of God, declares and pronounceth to all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his Gospel, *The Absolution and Remission of all their sins.* Which though spoken also in general terms, yet every particular Person there present, ought to apply it to himself, so as to be fully persuaded in his own mind, that if he doth but sincerely repent and believe the Gospel, he is perfectly absolved from all his sins by God himself, according to the Promises which he hath made to Mankind in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And now looking upon our selves as *absolved* from our sins, upon our Repentance and Faith in Christ, and by consequence as reconciled to God, we take the boldness to call him Father, humbly addressing our selves to him in that Divine Form of Prayer which he himself hath given us. Which done, we lift up our hearts and voices unto God; for his Assistance of us in what we do, in the words of David, the Minister crying out, *O Lord open thou our Lips, and the People Answering, And our Mouth shall shew forth thy Praise.* The Minister again, *O God make speed to save us, the People, O Lord make hast to help us.* And then immediately we all lift up our Bodies too, stand upon our Feet, and so put our selves into a posture of Praising and Magnifying the Eternal God, Father, Son, and holy Ghost, for his infinite Goodness and Mercy towards us, for which purpose the Minister first saith or sings the *Gloria Patri, Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,* and the People to shew their Consent, answer, *As it was in the Beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.* Amen. But not thinking this to be enough, the Minister calls upon the People again, saying, *Praise ye the Lord,* and the People answer, *the Lords Name be Praised,* and then we go on to praise him together, saying,

Sing or singing the 95. Psalm, *Venite exultemus Domino,*  
*O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice*  
*in the strength of our salvation, &c.* and so proceed to the  
Psalms appointed for the day. After every one of which,  
to testifie our Belief in the most Sacred Trinity, and our  
acknowledgement of that infinite Loye and Goodnes, which  
every one of those Divine Persons hath manifested to us,  
we repeat that incomparable Hymn, *Glory be to the Fa-*  
*ther, &c.*

Our Hearts being thus Raised up to God in Praising and  
Admiring of him, we are now in a fit temper and disposition  
to hear what he shall speak unto us. And therefore  
have a Chapter read out of the *old Testament*; and that  
in its ordinary course, except upon Sundays and Holydays,  
when more People attending the Publick Worship of God  
than can conveniently come upon other days, we read  
some select Chapter proper for the day, and such as is  
judged most edifying to all that are there present. And ha-  
ving thus heard God speaking unto us in his holy Word, we  
presently fall upon Praising of him again, for so unspeak-  
able a mercy, saying, or singing, in the Morning, the  
*Te Deum*, one of the most Heavenly and Seraphick Hymns  
that was ever Composed by Men; Or else the *Song of the*  
*three Children*, which is nothing but a Paraphrase upon  
that which David sang so often upon Earth, and which the  
Holy Angels sing continually in Heaven, even *Hallelujah,*  
*Praise ye the Lord.* Wherein we being all sensible how far  
short we our selves come of Praising God sufficiently, we  
call upon all the Creatures in the World to do it, *Bless ye*  
*the Lord, praise him and magnifie him forever.* In the After-  
noon we sing either the *Magnificat*, or else the 98. Psalm,  
both which being taken out of Gods own Word, cannot but  
be very pleasing and acceptable unto him.

After this our Souls being got upon the Wing again,<sup>1)</sup>  
and soaring aloft in the Contemplation of the Divine Per-  
fessions, we are now rightly qualified to hear and receive the

the Sublime Mysteries of the Gospel. And therefore have a Chapter read to us out of the New Testament. After which we being revived with the good Tydings of the Gospel, and filled with admiration at the infinite Goodness of God therein revealed to us, we break forth again in Praising and Adoring of him, in the Song of Zæbarias, or else the 100 *Psalm* in the Morning, and at Evening, either the 67 *Psalm*, or else the Song of Old Simeon, still Concluding with the *Gloria Patri*.

Now having thus heard some part of the Word of God read to us and expressed our thankfulness unto him for it, to signify our Assent, not only to what we have heard, but to the whole Scripture, we all with one Heart and Voice Repeat the *Apostles Creed*, wherein the Sum and Substance of it is contained. And so profess our selves to continue in the Number of Christs Disciples, and that as we were at first Baptized, so we still believe in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, God Blessed for evermore.

Hitherto we have been mostly taken up with Confessing our sins to God, imploring his Mercy in the Pardon of them, hearing his most Holy Word, acknowledging his Goodness to us, and praising and magnifying his Name for it. By which means, except we have been extreamly wanting to our selves, our Hearts cannot but be so united and fixed upon God, that we are now rightly disposed to make known our Wants and present our Petitions before him. This therefore is the next thing we set upon. But seeing that neither Minister nor People can possibly do it aright without the Assistance of God himself, therefore each of them first pray for his special Presence with the other. The one saying, *The Lord be with you*, the other, *And with thy Spirit*. And then immediately falling down upon our Knees, we Adore and Supplicate each Person of the most Blessed Trinity to have mercy upon

upon us, *Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us,*  
*Lord have mercy upon us.* After which we Address our selves  
to God in the words that he hath put into our Mouths, say-  
ing the *Lords Prayer*, which ended, the Minister and People  
by turns lift up their Hearts to God in some short and hea-  
venly Ejaculations, striving as it were to outvy each other  
in prevailing with the Almighty to pour down his Blessings  
upon us. And then in an humble and solemn manner we  
joynt together in supplicating his Divine Majesty for his  
Grace and Favour, his Defence and Protection, his Mercy  
and Blessing for our selves, for the King, for the Royal Fa-  
mily, for his Church, and for all Mankind. And this we  
do ordinarily in the Collects appointed for that pur-  
pose. But upon Wednesdays and Fridays, (upon which  
days the Primitive Church used to perform more than their  
ordinary Devotions) as also upon the Lords day in the  
Morning, we do it in the *Litanie*, and in such a *Litanie* as  
comprehends all and every thing that we can ever  
need to desire of Almighty God, either for our selves or  
others.

After this upon Sundays and Holydays we proceed to  
the *Communion Service*: And therefore approaching to  
the Lords Table, we begin it with his own Prayer.  
And after another short Prayer to God to cleanse the  
thoughts of our Heart by the Inspiration of his Holy Spirit,  
we read the *Ten Commandments* which he hath enjoyned  
us to observe; and after every Commandment we ask  
God Mercy for our Transgressions thereof for the time  
past, and grace to keep the same for the time to come;  
saying, *Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our Hearts to  
keep this Law.* And then after a Prayer for the King,  
and the *Collect* for the day, we read the *Epistle* and  
*Gospel*, that is, most commonly a short Paragraph taken  
out of the Canonical Epistles, and another out of one of  
the Holy Gospels, which was the Ancient Way of Read-  
ing the Scripture, before it was divided into Chapters.

And we do it now to prepare us the better for the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, therein revealed to us. But seeing we neither do nor can read over the whole, we repeat the substance of it in the *Nicene Creed*, which it is very necessary we should do at this time, that so we may demonstrate our selves to be Christians, and so capable of receiving the most holy Communion.

He that all this while hath employed himself as he ought to do in the service of our Church, cannot but find himself strangely edified by it. Yet howsoever, that nothing may be wanting that may any way conduce to our edification, after the *Nicene Creed*, our Church hath appointed a *Sermon* to be preached, which if sound, plain, and practical, as it ought to be, cannot but be very edifying too.

And now we may be well supposed to be so far edified, as to be raised up to the highest pitch of Devotion that we can arrive at in this World, and so are fit to be admitted to the highest Ordinance of the Church, the Sacrament of the Lords Supper. And therefore we now betake our selves to it. But that we may not appear before our Lord empty, we first offer up something to him of what he hath bestowed upon us, to be disposed of to pious and charitable uses; testifying thereby our acknowledgment of his goodness to us, and that we have nothing but what we receive from him. And to excite and encourage us to do this, all the while that we are offering, we have some select sentences of Scripture read to us, wherein God either commands us to be charitable, or else promiseth a blessing to those that are so. And then we pray for Christ's whole Church Militant here on earth, whereby we profess our selves to be real Members of it, and desirous to hold communion with it in Christ's Mystical Body and Blood. And so we proceed to the Celebration of it: in which the *Method* is so clear, so apparently

edifying, that I need not say any thing of it. But shall only observe two things in general concerning it.

First, That the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, being the highest Mystery in all our Religion, as representing the death of the Son of God to us, hence that place where this Sacrament is Administered, was always made and reputed the highest place in the Church. And therefore also it was wont to be separated from the rest of the Church by a Skreen or Partition of Network in Latine *Cancelli*, and that so generally, that from thence the place its self is called the *Chancell*. That this was anciently observed in the building of all considerable Churches (for I speak not of private Oratories or Chappels) within few Centuries after the Apostles themselves, even in the days of *Constantine* the Great, as well as in all Ages since, I could easily demonstrate from the Records of those times. But having purposely waved Antiquity hitherto, I am loath to trouble you with it now. But I mention it at present, only because some perhaps may wonder why this should be observed in our Church, rather than in all the other Churches which have been lately built in this City. Whereas they should rather wonder why it was not observed in all other as well as this. For besides our Obligations to conform as much as may be to the practice of the Universal Church, and to avoid novelty and singularity in all things relating to the Worship of God; it cannot be easily imagined that the Catholick Church in all Ages and places for 13 or 1400 years together, should observe such a Custom as this, except there were great reasons for it.

What they were, it is not necessary for us to enquire now. It may be sufficient to observe at present that the Chancel in our Christian Churches, was always looked upon as answering to the Holy of Holies in the Temple, which, you know, was separated from the Sanctuary or Body of the Temple, by the Command of God himself.

And

And that this place being appropriated to the Sacrament of the Lords Supper , it ought to be so contrived , as may be most convenient for thole who are to partake of that Blessed Ordinance . But it must needs be more convenient for those who are to enjoy Communion with Christ , and in him with one another , in this holy Sacrament , to meet together , as one body , in one place seperated for that purpose , than to be dispersed , as otherwise they would be ; some in one and some in another part of the Church . Or in short , it is much better for the place to be separate , than the people .

Furthermore , It is not only convenient , but in some sense necessary , for every Communicant to observe and take special notice of the several Circumstances which our Lord hath ordained to be used in this Sacrament , as the Breaking of the Bread , and the Consecrating both that and the Wine , to represent his Death , the breaking of his Body , and the shedding of his Blood for our sins ; that so our hearts may be the more affected with it , and by consequence our Souls more edified by it . But this cannot be so well done , except there be a place set apart for it : where they may all be placed , about or near to the Communion Table , and so behold what is there done at the Consecration of the Elements . Hence also it is , that the Seats there are and ought to be so ordered , that all that are in them may still look that way , and contemplate upon their Blessed Saviour , there evidently set forth as Crucified for them .

The other thing that I would observe unto you concerning the Holy Communion , is this , that our Church requireth , or at least supposeth it to be Administ ered every Lords-day , and every Holy day throughout the year , as it was in the Primitive Church . For that is the reason that the *Common Service* is appointed to be used upon all such days , and to be read at the Communion Table , that so the Minister may be there ready to Administer it

## 28 *The Excellency and ussefulness*

unto all that desire to partake of it: Which shews the great care that our Church hath of all her Members, that they might be edified and confirmed in the Faith. To which nothing contributes more then frequent Communion at our Lords Table. Which if People could once be perswaded to, they would soon find greater benefit by it, then I can express, or they themselves, till then, imagine. I shall say no more of it at present, but only this, That I am so sensible of what I now say, that could I be sure to have a sufficient number of Communicants, I should be heartily glad to Administer this Holy Sacrament every Lords day, both for their sakes, and my own too.

Thus I have given you a short Scheme of that excellent Method wherein our Divine Service is performed: which whosoever rightly considers, will need no other Argument to convince him, that it is according to the Apostles Rule, very *Edifying* indeed. The last thing to be considered in it, is the *Manner of its Performance*; by which I mean only the several postures of the Body, as *standing*, and *kneeling*, which are used in it; for they also are done to *edifying*.

While we say or sing the Hymns and Psalms to the Praise and Glory of God, we *stand up*, not only to signifie, but to excite the Elevation of our minds at that time. For as on the one hand, if our Souls be really lift up in the praises of God, our Bodies will naturally lift up themselves to accompany them, as far as they can towards Heaven; so on the other hand, the raising up of our bodies helps towards the raising up of our Souls too, by putting us in mind of that high and heavenly work we are now about, wherein according to our weak Capacities, we joyn with the Quire of Heaven in praising God now, as we hope to do it for evermore. For this cause also we *stand at the Creeds*, for they being Confessi-

ons of our Faith in God, as such, they come under the proper Notion of Hymns or Songs of praise to him. All our praising God being really nothing else but our Confessing and acknowledging him to be what he is in himself and to us. And besides that, by our standing both at the *Creeds* and *Gospels*, we signify our assent unto them, and our readiness to defend them, to the utmost of our power against all opposition whatsoever. And as for the *Gospels* particularly, they contain the very Acts which our Lord did, and the very Words which he spake when he was upon Earth; and therefore we who profess him to be our Lord and Master, cannot surely but stand up, when we hear him speaking, and listen diligently to those gracious words which proceeded out of his Divine Mouth.

And as when we praise God, we raise up our selves as high as we can towards Heaven, so when we pray unto him, we fall down as low as we can towards the Earth, not daring to present our supplications to the absolute Monarch of the whole World, any other ways then upon our knees. Which is so proper, so natural a posture of Supplicants, that if all men would but duly consider what they do when they pray to Almighty God, the Church need never have commanded them to kneel at that time. For they could not chuse but do it: No, not although the place where they are should seem never so inconvenient for it. For we find our Blessed Saviour himself kneeling at his Prayer in the Garden, upon the bare ground, *Luke* 22. 41, and St. *Paul* upon the Sea-shore, where he could have no other Cushion but Stones or Sand, *Acts* 21. 5. Howsoever, To take off all those little excuses that men are apt to make for themselves in this case, the Seats in this Church are so dispoled, and all things so prepared in them, that there can be no inconvenience at all in it, but rather all the conveniences for kneeling that can be desired. And therefore if any of you shall yet neglect to kneel, while the Prayers are read, they will give us too much cause

to all their Religion into question , or to suspect they have none at all , For if they had , they durst not , they could not offer such a manifest affront to the great Creator of the World , as to carry themselves no otherwise while they pray to him , than as if they were conversing with their fellow Creatures . But why do I speak of their praying unto God ? It is too much to be feared they do not pray at all , nor come to the Church for any better purpose then only to see and be seen . I am sure they perform no *Act of External Worship or Adoration unto God* , nor shew him that respect and reverence which is due unto him ; and so give very great offence to all pious and devout Christians .

Whereas if all and every person in the Congregation , would always be upon their *knees* , while they put up their petitions to the most high God , what a mighty advantage would this be , not only to every one in particular , but to the whole Congregation in general ? For as every one would by this means keep his heart more stedfast in the true fear and dread of God , and likewise more certainly obtain the good things he prays for , as the Fathers frequently assert : so the whole Congregation also , would be very much *edified* by it . For by this means we should excite and inflame each others Devotions , confirm and strengthen one anothers Faith , and convince both our selves and all that see us , that Religion is indeed a serious thing ; and that we believe it to be so , by our serving God with so much *reverence and godly fear* , as this humble posture representeth . And therefore as you tender the love of God , the credit of Religion , or the salvation of your own souls , I beseech you all in the name of him that made you , that whensoever you come hither to pray unto him , you do it in that awful , lowly , and solemn manner , which our Church commandeth , and as becometh creatures , when you speak to your great and almighty Creator ; that so you may give true Worship and honour unto

unto him, and also receive that benefit and edification of your selves, which he hath promised and you expect from your Publick Prayers. This being certainly the most Edifying posture that you can possibly use upon such occasions.

From what we have hitherto discoursed concerning the *Language*, the *Matter*, the *Method*, and the *Manner of Performing Divine Service*, as contained and prescribed in the Book of *Common Prayer*, we may positively conclude that it agrees exactly with the Rule in my Text, even that, *All things in it are done to edifying*: Which was the thing I undertook to prove. I know that many other Arguments might be brought to shew the Excellency and Usefulness of the *Common Prayer*. But these already produced are sufficient to convince any sober and considering Christian of it. And if there be any here present who are not yet convinced by what they have heard of it, I desire only one thing of them, and that is, That they would but make tryal of it for a while. For my Charity prompts me to believe that all the Zeal that some express against the *Common Prayer*, and all that indifference that is in others for it, proceeds only from their ignorance of what it is, or at least from their want of an experimental knowledg of it. For let any Man that seriously minds the Worship of God and the Salvation of his Soul before all things else, let such a one, I say, set himself in good earnest to use the *Common Prayer*, as he ought to do for some considerable time, and I doubt not but that by the blessing of God, he will find that benefit and edification by it, that his own experience shall convince him of all that I have now said, more than all the Arguments that I have, or any man in the World can ever produce to him. Some perhaps may think this to be a Paradox: But I do not question but that many here present can attest it upon their own knowledg: Having found themselves

selves more confirmed in their Faith, more settled in the ~~ir~~  
Religion, more humbled for their sins, more supported  
under their troubles, more inflamed with Love to God  
and desires of Heaven, every way more *Edifyed* by the  
constant use of the *Common Prayer*, than they could e-  
ver have believed it possible to have been, except they  
had found it to be so by their own experience.

Now these things being thus briefly considered, I shall observe only two things from them. The first is the extraordinary prudence as well as piety of our first Reformers, who first compiled the Book of *Common Prayer*, so exactly Conformable to the Word of God and that Apostolical Canon in my Text; which I cannot but ascribe to the same extraordinary aid and assistance from God, whereby they were afterwards enabled to suffer persecution, yea Martyrdome it self for his sake, and so to confirm what they have done with their own Blood, which certainly is no small commendation of it.

The other thing I would observe unto you, is the reason, why the Devil hath had such a spight against the *Common Prayer*, ever since it was first made. For the more *edifying* it is to Gods People, the more destructive it must needs be of the Devils Kingdom. And therefore it is no wonder that he hath all along employed the utmost of his power and policy to blast its Reputation, and so to discourage and dissuade Men from the use of it. And by the permission of God for the punishment of this ungrateful Nation, he hath so far prevailed in his design, that the Liturgy hath been twice cast out of the Church, since it was first brought into it, once in the Reign of Queen *Mary*, and then again in the days of King *Charles* the first.

In the Reign of Queen *Mary*, you all know, who were his Instruments in the doing of it, even the *Papists*. For they clearly and truly fore-saw, that their Erroneous O-  
pinions

pinions could never be believed , nor their superstitious Practices observed in the Nation , so long as the *Common Prayer* was used. Forasmuch as there is nothing in that but what is found and agreeable to the Doctrine of the Gospel, and so contrary to the groundless Opinions which the Church of *Rome* would obtrude upon the World for Articles of Faith. And besides that , there are many expressions purposely inserted in it, to arm us against the Popes Supremacy , Indulgences , Invocation of Saints , Transubstantiation , and other Popish Errors. So that it would have been impossible for the Romish Religion to be ever restored in the Nation , unless the *Common Prayer* was first removed. Which therefore they took care to have done as soon as possible. But within a few years after, even the first of Queen *Elizabeth*, it was brought in again. And as the Reformation was begun before, so from that time forward it was carried on and perfected, chiefly by means of the *Common Prayer*. For it is very observable that in the Reign of King *Edward* the Sixth, and for several years too of Queen *Elizabeth*, there was little or no preaching in most parts of the Kingdom , and few then could read English , and yet by the constant and general use of the Liturgy , and Gods Blessing upon it , the whole Nation was so edified in the True Religion , that there was scarce one in an hundred but forsook and abhorred all Popish Doctrines and Superstitions: Which is an undeniable Argument , that in this respect also it is as edifying , as it is possible for a thing of that nature to be. In so much that so long as the *Common Prayer* is used and frequented as it ought to be , it is morally impossible for Popery to get any ground amongst us. But if this Bulwark was once removed (which God forbid ) our grand Adversary would soon accomplish his malicious designs upon us, one way or other.

This he knows well enough ; and therefore hath left no stone unturned to effect it. But what he had done

34 *The Excellency and Usefulness*

before by the Papists, he afterwards brought about again by other means in the Reign of King Charles the First. For by what kind of Spirit the *Common Prayer* was then cast out, you all know, and some of you found by woful experience. All that I shall say of it, is only this, That the same Spirit that then stirred up people so violently against the *Common Prayer*, stirr'd them up at the same time to Rebel against their King, to take away Mens Estates and Lives, contrary to all Law and Justice; and at last to Murther one of the most pious Princes that ever lived. And whether that was the Spirit of Christ or Antichrist, God or the Devil, judge you. Be sure the consequents of its being laid aside at that time were very sad. For people being deprived of that whereby they should have been *edified*, were immediately tossed to and fro with every wind of Doctrine, until at length many of them fell into the most pernicious and damnable Heresies that were ever heard of in the Church. Yea together with the Liturgy, they laid aside all distinction betwixt sacred and common things; by which means the whole Nation was in danger of being over-spread with Profaneness and Irreligion.

But blessed be the Name of the most high God for it, he was once more pleased to appear for us; and in a miraculous manner to restore our *Common Prayer* to his Church, together with our Gracious Sovereign to his Kingdoms. But what shall we render to the Lord for so great a Blessing as this is? All that he expects, or we can give him for it, is only to make the best use of it that we can. This therefore is that which I now pray and beseech you all for the future to do. Do not think it enough to be for the *Common Prayer*, and to come now and then to hear it. This you may do, as many do, and yet receive no more benefit by it, than as if there was none at all to be received. Which therefore can by no means be imputed to the *Common Prayer* its self, but to

to the negligence of those that use it. Neither must you think it enough to talk high for it, or to rail at those who are not so happy as to be rightly informed about it. But rather take all opportunities to inform them, and by all means possible to convince them of the Excellency and Usefulness of it. Which you can never do so effectually, as by your outstripping and exceeding them in Virtue and Good Works. For this is and ever will be a plain Demonstration, that the *Common Prayer* is indeed far more *edifying*, than those new Modes of Religion, which they are so unhappily seduced into. That therefore you may do this, and so both experience in your selves, and demonstrate unto others, the truth and certainty of what you have now heard, concerning the *Common Prayer*, I desire you to observe these few Rules in the using of it.

First, Come not to our *Publick Prayer* only out of Custom or for Fashion sake, as the manner of some is, but out of a sincere obedience to Gods Commands, and with a sure trust and confidence in his Promises for his Blessing upon what you do. For which end it will be very good as you go to Church, to bethink your selves whether you are going, and what you are to do there, that so laying aside all other business, you may put your selves into a right temper for so great a Work.

Secondly, Frequent our *Publick Prayers* as often as conveniently you can. The oftner you are at them, the better you will like them, and the more edified you will be by them. And therefore do not satisfie your selves with hearing them once a Week. In this City, as also in many other places of the Kingdom, especially where there are Cathedrals, or Collegiate Churches, you may enjoy the benefit of them publickly every day, and so keep your hearts continually in an holy and heavenly,

frame, and always live as becometh Christians: And if you neglect such opportunities as are now put in your hands, you will one day wish you had not; but then wishing will do no good.

Thirdly, If possible, come always at the beginning of *Divine Service*. Otherwise you will certainly miss of something that would have been edifying to you, and perhaps of that, which at that time might have done you more good than all the rest. Neither will you lose the benefit only of part of it, but in some measure of the whole too. All the parts of it being linked together in so excellent a manner and method, that they influence and assist each other: So that nothing can be omitted either by Minister or People, but the whole will suffer by it, and lose something of that Virtue and Efficacy, which otherwise you would find in it.

Fourthly, All the while that you are in Gods House, carry your selves as in his special presence, and suitably to the work you are about; standing while you praife God, and kneeling while you pray unto him, as our Church hath directed you. For though these may seem but little things in themselves, yet they are of great consequence, both to our Worshipping of God aright, and also to our being edified by what we do, as I have shewed before.

Lastly, Take special care all along to keep your minds intent upon the matter in hand. When you confess your sins to God, do it with an hearty and sincere Repentance for all the Errors of your life past. When the Absolution is pronounced, receive it with a firm and stedfast Faith in Christ your Saviour. When you repeat or sing the Hymns and Psalms, raise up your Spirits as high as you can to joyn with those above in praising and magnifying

nifying the Eternal God. When the Word of God is read, hearken diligently unto it, and consider seriously what he that made you saith to you, and requireth of you, and resolve by his Blessing to believe and live accordingly. And all the while that you are upon your knees, putting up your Petitions to the most high God, let your whole Souls be employed in it, earnestly desiring the good things you pray for at his gracious hands, and humbly confiding on his faithful promises for the granting of them. By this means you will perform reasonable service unto God, and by consequence that which will be very acceptable unto him, and as profitable and edifying to your selves. Whereas they that do not observe this Rule, cannot be properly said to pray, or serve God at all. And therefore it is no wonder that they come to Church, and hear the *Common Prayer* read, and yet are no way edified by it. Indeed it is impossible that they should. For as much as all the benefit and edification that we can possibly receive from any of our Devotions, depends very much upon the due intention of our minds in the performance of them. To which, as I have shewn, both a Form of Prayer in general, and ours in particular, is a very great help.

Do but observe these plain and necessary Rules in using of the *Common Prayer* (without which you cannot be truly said to use, but rather to abuse it) and you will soon find what I have said about it to be true, even that *All things in it are done to Edifying*. And therefore I would to God that not only you that hear me at this time, but all the people of the Nation could be once persuaded to do so. What an Holy Nation, what a peculiar People should we then become? How pious towards God? How Loyal to our Sovereign? How Just and Charitable to one another? For by our constant Worshipping Almighty God in so solemn and devout a manner as

this

this is, our hearts would be over-awed with so great a fear of his Divine Majesty, that we should never dare willingly to offend him. Our minds would be filled and impregnated with such a sense of his power and sovereignty, that we should honour and revere it in those also whom he hath set over us. Our whole Souls would be raised up so much above the World, that we should not do an ill act to gain it wholly to our selves. In short, we should be every day *edified* more and more in Faith, in Love, in Humility, in Self-denial, in Temperance, in Patience, in all true Grace and Virtue: And so we should go from strength to strength, from one degree of grace unto another, until at length we arrive at Glory and Perfection in the highest Heavens where we shall spend Eternity its self in Praising and Adoring the most high God; as for all the other Mercies which he hath vouchsafed to us, so in a particular manner for our being Members of such an Apostolical Church, wherein *all* things are done to edifying.

Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant we may all do in and through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, World without end. *Amen.*

**F I N I S.**

